

Thawing Food Properly Fact Sheet

Here are the four acceptable ways to thaw food safely:

In a refrigerator. Thaw food in a refrigerator at 41°F (5°C) or lower to keep dangerous microorganisms from growing. Plan ahead when thawing large items such as turkeys—they can take several days to thaw.

Under running water. Thaw food submerged under running water at a temperature of 70°F (21°C) or lower. The water flow must be strong enough to wash food particles into the overflow drain.

Freezing does not kill microorganisms, but it does slow their growth. When you thaw frozen food, parts of the outer surface warm up enough to allow dangerous microorganisms to grow. Since it can take more than four hours to thaw most food, it is very important to thaw it properly, so dangerous microorganisms are not allowed to grow.

In a microwave oven. You can safely thaw food in a microwave oven if the food will be cooked immediately. Large items such as roasts or turkeys may not thaw well in a microwave.

As part of the cooking process. You can thaw food as part of the cooking process. For example, when you cook frozen hamburger patties on the grill, you thaw the hamburgers and then cook them to a minimum internal temperature of 155°F (68°C) for 15 seconds all in one step.

